STATE DOCUMENTS

What Everyone Should Know About . . .

DIABETES

"The Keys to Success in Diabetes Control Are Early Discovery and Continuing Medical Supervision."

MONTANA STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Helena, Montana
July 1967

S
616.462
H2W

MONTANA STATE LIBRARY
930 East Lyndale Avenue
Helena, Montana 59601

Montana State Library
3 0864 1006 5536 7

WHAT IS DIABETES?

In the digestive process:

(a) sugar and starches in the food which have been eaten are changed by digestive juices to a form of sugar called "glucose."

(b) "insulin", a hormone, produced by the pancreas, acts on the glucose so the body can use it for nourishment.

If the pancreas, a large gland back of the stomach, does not produce enough insulin, or if the body does not make proper use of it, the unused glucose collects in the blood and some of it may pass off in the urine. If this happens, the condition is called DIABETES, and the person who has it is called a "diabetic."

CAN DIABETES BE CURED?

At the present time there is no known cure for diabetes, but it can be treated, and if treatment is started in time, the diabetes can usually be kept under control. Early treatment usually makes it possible for a person with diabetes to live almost as well as anyone else.

The chief problem arises because many people do not know they have diabetes. Among adults, there are usually no symptoms or very mild symptoms in the early stages of diabetes. These people may go untreated until complications develop.

HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT IF THEY HAVE DIABETES?

A simple blood test can be made either in the office of the physician or it may be made when there is a community "screening" program.

A technician runs the test on a sample of blood and determines the amount of glucose in the blood.

If the amount of glucose is found to be high, it does not necessarily mean the person has diabetes. But it does mean the person should have further tests made by his physician.

Since anyone can develop diabetes and since the symptoms are either vague or do not exist in the early stages of diabetes, this test helps find "suspected" diabetics. These individuals then must see their physicians before a diagnosis can be made. If the individual does have diabetes, treatment can be started before complications develop.

ARE SOME PERSONS MORE APT TO DEVELOP DIABETES THAN OTHERS?

Yes, although some children develop diabetes, usually the persons who develop this disease are:

(a) 40 or more years of age

(b) more apt to be women than men

(c) overweight

(d) those with relatives who have the disease

(e) women who have given birth to big babies — 9 pounds or over.

Heredity is an important factor in diabetes. Among families where one parent is a diabetic and the other a 'diabetic carrier", seven out of ten children become diabetic. A "carrier" is one whose grandparents (two maternal, or two paternal) have diabetes or one of the person's parents is either a carrier or has diabetes. All persons who are in families where there is a diabetic should be informed and should understand, but not be frightened, about the possibility of inheriting the disease.

HOW IS DIABETES TREATED?

Physicians prescribe the treatment for each individual which may consist of one or more of the following:

diet to meet the daily needs but eliminate unneeded nourishment

insulin or oral drugs to lower the blood sugar or stimulate the pancreas to increase the output of insulin

exercise to aid the diabetic utilize sugars and starches

avoiding an overweight condition since obesity is known to precede diabetes in 85% of the cases

good personal hygiene, especially care of the feet

regular medical supervision

the diabetic is usually instructed to test urine samples at stated intervals.

WHAT CAN HAPPEN IF A DIABETIC IS NOT UNDER TREATMENT?

His vague symptoms may become more noticeable. His fatigue and thirst may be greater; he may lose weight in spite of a ravenous appetite; he needs to urinate more frequently; he may have skin infections such as boils, pimples and itching skin. Eye trouble, circulatory problems, kidney or blood problems may develop. Diabetic coma, a serious complication, could occur and death could result.

REMEMBER . . .

—About 2 persons in every 100 have diabetes, and about half of them do not know it.

—Diabetes must be detected before it can be treated.

—Untreated diabetes usually leads to complications.

—Diabetics can usually live a full and productive life if they get under care in the early stages of the disease and if they follow the prescribed treatment exactly.

2